

# United States Senate

February 10, 2017

COMMITTEES  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND  
FORESTRY  
APPROPRIATIONS  
ENERGY AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Honorable Tom Price  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Price:

Congratulations on being confirmed as the next Secretary of the United States Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). You have been entrusted with leading our national healthcare initiatives and priorities during historic and challenging times. With your expertise as an orthopedic surgeon and as a legislator, I have full confidence that you will set a course that re-centers our healthcare around the patient and not government bureaucrats. It was a privilege to serve with you for a time as a fellow member of the United States House of Representatives and I look forward to working with you as Secretary of HHS.

The impact of healthcare on our families, our communities, and our states, both physically and economically, cannot be understated. Under Obamacare, Americans across our country are facing excessive healthcare premiums increasing at double digit rates, on average 27 to 58 percent in Montana. Nearly a third of all counties have only one provider to choose from in the individual market and patients' access to their preferred doctors is diminishing. Obamacare's tax, spend, and regulate formula has failed to achieve its fundamental goal of providing affordable care. Meanwhile, the Medicaid expansion program has cost taxpayers far more than projected and is not sustainable in its current form. I'm eager to work with you on solutions to repeal this deeply flawed law and replace it with better solutions that support access to coverage and care without placing severe hardships on the American people.

I want to draw your attention to several additional issues important to Montana. I ask that you elevate the unique healthcare needs of rural communities by restoring certainty to Critical Access Hospitals—too many of which are hanging on the financial brink—supporting community health centers, developing programs that encourage flexible and innovative frontier health programs, and strongly encouraging the development and use of new technology, including telemedicine, that can shrink the distance to care in rural communities. Such commitments are essential to preventing, and addressing existing, provider shortages in Montana communities. Further, I urge you to take decisive and comprehensive actions to strengthen the quality of care Native Americans receive under the Indian Health Service, which is in dire need of reform, and to recommend to Congress statutory changes that are needed to improve this system. Additionally, I encourage you to continue to prioritize the important work of the National Institutes of Health as it tackles the health challenges that affect so many Montanans and others across our nation.

Congratulations again on your confirmation. I invite you to join me in Montana to meet with our rural health providers to discuss the many health issues important to Montanans, and I look forward to continuing to dialogue with you as you carry out the mission and duties of the Department of Health & Human Services.

Sincerely,



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STEVE DAINES  
United States Senator